

ISRAEL, LIKUD AND THE
ZIONIST DREAM

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*Power, Politics and Ideology
from Begin to Netanyahu*

COLIN SHINDLER

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IN MEMORY OF BARRY SHENKER, 1944-1992

Each time a man stands up for an ideal,
or seeks to improve the lot of others,
or strikes out against injustice,
he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope,
and crossing each other
from a million centres of energy and daring,
those ripples build a current that can sweep down
the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

*Robert Kennedy,
South Africa 1966*

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Many busy people in Israel gave up their time to see me, to answer my questions, and to explain the subtleties of a particular situation which had eluded me. They include Moshe Arens, Benny Begin, Yossi Beilin, Eliahu Ben-Elissar, Boas Evron, Alouph Hareven, Shulamith Hareven, Moshe Katzav, Avishai Margalit, Dan Meridor, Aryeh Naor, Yuval Ne'eman, Ari Rath, Tom Segev, Zalman Shoval, Benny Temkin, Ornan Yekutieli and Dedi Zucker. Nitza Ben-Elissar of the Jewish Agency organized my schedule brilliantly and I am grateful to my friend John Levy for the connection. The Greenbergs of Baka gave me the warmth of their friendship and the run of their household.

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Although there is a short postscript, the book effectively concludes with the results of the 1992 election. The Oslo agreement and the Arafat–Rabin accord seemed to promise hope for a peaceful future, yet this conflict is no fairy story which smoothly concludes with a happy ending.

While it is perfectly true that only enemies can make peace, the process of that peace-making has become tortuous and uncertain. And this had been exploited to the full by its opponents. Too many curse the peacemakers with a passion that often spills over into violence. Action today, they argue, may avert a war tomorrow. This book is therefore a contribution towards an understanding of the present. The creation of the future depends on analysing the past. As Rabbi Eleazar Ben-Azariah said two millennia ago: 'Where there is no wisdom, there can be no reverence and where there is no reverence, there can be no wisdom; where there is no knowledge, there can be no insight and where there is no insight, there can be no knowledge.'

*Colin Shindler
London, July 1995*

GLOSSARY

OF HEBREW TERMS

<i>Achdut Ha'avoda</i>	Pioneering left socialist Zionist party, characterized by maximalist policies towards the Arabs. Part of the Labour Party since 1968.
<i>Agudat Yisrael</i>	A-Zionist ultra-orthodox party influenced by Hassidism.
<i>Al Hamishmar</i>	Left-wing daily newspaper, often associated with the policies of Mapam.
<i>Aliyah</i>	Emigration to Israel – literally, 'going up'.
<i>Ashkenazim</i>	Jews from Central and Eastern Europe.
<i>Askanim</i>	Term of abuse for party apparatchiks.
<i>Betar</i>	Revisionist youth movement, later affiliated to Herut.
<i>B'ezrat Ha'shem</i>	'With the help of God.'
<i>B'machteret</i>	'In the Underground': publication of the Stern Group.
<i>Bnei Adam</i>	Worthy person.
<i>Bnei Brak</i>	Ultra-orthodox neighbourhood of Tel Aviv.
<i>Brit Ha'Biryonim</i>	Union of Zealots: neo-fascist group, active in the early 1930s.
<i>Davar</i>	Labour movement daily newspaper.
<i>Degel Ha'Torah</i>	Non-Zionist ultra-orthodox party, influenced by the Lithuanian school of <i>mitnagdim</i> .
<i>Ein Vered Group</i>	Maximalist Labour activists, some of whom were associated with Techiya.
<i>Eretz Israel</i>	The Land of Israel.
<i>Gahal</i>	Gush Herut Liberalim, the Herut-Liberal bloc formed in 1965.
<i>Gush Emunim</i>	Religious settlers' movement in the Territories.
<i>Ha'aretz</i>	Leading intellectual liberal daily newspaper.
<i>Hadar</i>	Jaobotinskyian concept of honour and dignity.
<i>Haganah</i>	Jewish defence force in the Yishuv, predecessor of the IDF.

<i>Halakhah</i>	Religious Jewish law.
<i>Ha'mefaked</i>	The commander of the Irgun.
<i>Ha'olam Haze</i>	Radical campaigning magazine.
<i>Hasbarah</i>	Explanation of events.
<i>Hassidim</i>	Adherents of a popular ultra-orthodox movement, characterized by devotion to its rabbinical leader and fervent concentration on the relationship with God.
<i>Havlagah</i>	Policy of self-restraint.
<i>Hazit Ha'Moledet</i>	The Fatherland Front, a Lehi front which carried out the Bernadotte assassination.
<i>He'Hazit</i>	The publication of Lehi.
<i>Herut</i>	Party formed by Menachem Begin in 1948 and political successor to the Irgun Zva'i Leumi; now part of the Likud.
<i>Histadrut</i>	The General Federation of Labour in Israel.
<i>Im ba l'horgach hashkem l'horgo</i>	'If someone comes to kill you, rise up so as to kill them.'
<i>Informatzia</i>	Information.
<i>Irgun Zva'i Leumi</i>	National Military Organization: founded by Jabotinsky and led by Menachem Begin in the struggle against the Mandatory authorities.
<i>Irgun Zva'i Leumi b'Israel</i>	The first name used by the Stern Group.
<i>Kach</i>	Far-right party, led by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, barred from running in Israeli elections.
<i>Kollel</i>	Religious learning community.
<i>Kupat Holim</i>	The sick fund, the health insurance scheme of the Histadrut.
<i>Lehi</i>	'Fighters for the Freedom of Israel', formerly the Stern Group.
<i>La'am</i>	One of the constituent groups of the Likud, formed from the State List, the Free Centre and the Labour Land of Israel Movement.
<i>Likud</i>	Right-wing bloc, inheritor of Revisionism. Dominant party in Israeli politics 1977-92.
<i>Lishkat avoda</i>	The employment exchange which provided labour for employers.
<i>Ma'apach</i>	Upheaval - applied to the change of government in both 1977 and 1992.
<i>Ma'arach</i>	Labour Alignment with Mapam: 1969 until the formation of the National Unity government with the Likud in 1984.

<i>Machteret Yehudit</i>	The Jewish Underground.
<i>Mafdal</i>	National Religious Party.
<i>Malchut Israel</i>	The sovereignty of the Land.
<i>Mapai</i>	Centrist Labour Party led by Ben-Gurion. Dominant party in early Israeli governments.
<i>Mapam</i>	Dovish leftist Zionist party.
<i>Masigai gvul</i>	Trespassers.
<i>Mechdal</i>	The lack of preparation for the Yom Kippur war.
<i>Meimad</i>	Dovish religious Zionist party formed to fight the 1988 election.
<i>Meretz</i>	Left-of-centre peace alignment: secular grouping consisting of Mapam, Shinui and Ratz, which joined the Rabin government in 1992.
<i>Meshiach</i>	The messiah.
<i>Milchemet mitzva</i>	Obligatory war.
<i>Mishnah</i>	First subject-ordered codification of the oral law.
<i>Mitnagdim</i>	Ultra-orthodox opponents of the Hassidim.
<i>Mitzvah</i>	Commandment, good deed.
<i>Mizrachi</i>	Religious Zionist movement, central component of the National Religious Party.
<i>Modi'in Ezrachi</i>	Israeli polling organization.
<i>Moledet</i>	Far-right party, characterized by the policy of 'transfer'.
<i>Moshav</i>	A cooperative agricultural settlement of individual owners of home and land.
<i>Nekuda</i>	The publication of Gush Emunim.
<i>Netivot Shalom</i>	Religious peace movement.
<i>Palmach</i>	The leftist assault companies of the Hagana.
<i>Pikuach nefesh</i>	The saving of Jewish lives: the principle of the primary importance of the saving of life.
<i>Porshim</i>	Dissidents: the name applied to the Irgun and Lehi by the Zionist establishment.
<i>Rafi</i>	Reshimat Poalei Israel, the Israel Workers' List: Mapai breakaway party, 1965-68, led by Ben-Gurion.
<i>Rak Kak</i>	Revisionist slogan: 'Only Thus!'
<i>Ratz</i>	Civil Rights and Peace movement, founded and headed by Shulamit Aloni.
<i>Rodef</i>	Assailant.
<i>Rosh Betar</i>	The head of Betar, Jabotinsky's post and honorific title.
<i>Sephardim</i>	Jews from the 'East'.

<i>Sha'atnez</i>	The Biblical term used by Jabotinsky to prohibit a mixing of ideologies such as socialism and Zionism.
<i>Shas</i>	Ultra-orthodox Sephardi party. An integral part of Rabin's 1992 government.
<i>Shechem</i>	The Biblical name for Nablus.
<i>Shefichut damim</i>	The shedding of blood.
<i>Sheli</i>	Small leftist, pro-peace group with origins in the Communist Party split of 1965; one of the earliest to call for negotiations with the PLO; won two seats in the 1977 election.
<i>Shinui</i>	Dovish centrist non-socialist party.
<i>Shiurim</i>	Religious study sessions, usually given by a rabbinical authority.
<i>Shlemut Historit</i>	The historic 'completeness' of Eretz Israel.
<i>Shlemut Ha'moledet</i>	The 'completeness' of the homeland.
<i>Shlomzion</i>	Sharon's short-lived party for the 1977 election.
<i>Shoah</i>	The Nazi Holocaust.
<i>Shofar</i>	The ram's horn.
<i>Shomer Shabbat</i>	The keeping of the Shabbat.
<i>Ta'amula</i>	Propaganda.
<i>Tami</i>	Sephardi breakaway party from the National Religious Party; won three seats in the 1981 election.
<i>Techiya</i>	Far-right party, formed in 1979 after Camp David through a split in Likud; obliterated in the 1992 election.
<i>Telem</i>	Party formed by Moshe Dayan for the 1981 election.
<i>Tenuat Ha'Herut</i>	The Herut Movement.
<i>Tenuat Ha'Meri Ha'Ivri</i>	The United Resistance Movement of the Haganah, the Irgun and Lehi, 1945-46.
<i>Tohar Ha'neshek</i>	The purity of arms.
<i>Torah</i>	Traditionally, the five books of Moses. In a wider sense, the entire body of religious precepts, learning and life.
<i>Tsadikim</i>	Wise scholars.
<i>Tsomet</i>	Far-right party of former Labour movement people; won eight seats in the 1992 election due to a strong stand against disproportionate religious influence in Israeli politics.
<i>Yahadut Ha'Torah</i>	The United Judaism list formed for the 1992 election by Agudat Yisrael and Degel Ha'Torah.
<i>Yated Ne'eman</i>	Ultra-orthodox weekly newspaper, generally supporting the views of Rabbi Schach.

<i>Yediot Aharonot</i>	Popular Israeli daily newspaper.
<i>Yefei nefesh</i>	Do-gooders.
<i>Yeshiva</i>	Religious seminary.
<i>Yesh Gvul</i>	Organization of reservists who initially refused to serve in Lebanon in 1982 and then extended their refusal to the Territories.
<i>Yishuv</i>	The Jewish settlement in Palestine before 1948.
<i>Yom Ha'atzmaut</i>	Independence Day.
<i>Zarim</i>	Foreigners.

INTRODUCTION

Following the victory of the Likud in the election of 1977, writers on the Middle East conflict began to turn their attention to the Israeli right. This spawned numerous biographies of Menachem Begin and the recent memoirs of Yitzhak Shamir. While many works added pieces to the jigsaw puzzle, my motivation in writing this book was to examine the phenomenon as a whole through the rise and rule of the Likud. The book sets out to explain where leaders such as Begin and Shamir were coming from ideologically, and how they shaped the Likud to become a party of natural government; and to record and detail their road to power and how their world outlook came to define far-reaching and seemingly unfathomable decision-making. In order to do this, it was important to go beyond propaganda and hagiography on one side and blinkered opposition on the other.

My original intention was to write a political analysis of the Likud in power from its election in 1977 until its defeat in 1992. It soon became clear that a brief introduction to Begin's Herut movement and the Revisionist Zionist heritage would not suffice. In order to understand what made the Likud tick, it was important to explain its historical and ideological background. I therefore chose to begin the study in 1931, the year in which Vladimir Jabotinsky and his followers first made a breakthrough at the 17th Zionist Congress and established the Revisionists as a force to be reckoned with.

In one sense, any examination of the Likud is a reflection of an ongoing process of fragmentation and coalescence of the Revisionist movement. This began shortly after its establishment with the evolution into the New Zionist Organization and continued into the split between the Irgun Zva'i Leumi and the Stern Group. The reasons for the split were many, but a central one was the desire to initiate a military revolt against the British authorities in Palestine. While the

Irgun waited until the war against Nazism was over, the Stern Group – later Lehi – began 'The Revolt'.

Avraham Stern was a unique figure in that he was the first to ditch the central Zionist idea that the British were the only power that would bring about a Jewish state. Unlike both the Labour movement and the Revisionists, he believed in Zionism as a national liberation movement and that the Jewish state would be attained through armed struggle. He looked to the IRA, Garibaldi, the Russian Social Revolutionaries and the Jewish revolt against the Romans as models and sought to learn the lessons of their failures. This led Stern to approach in turn Pilsudski's Poland, Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany as potential allies in place of Britain. In Stern's eyes, World War II enhanced the possibility of assistance from the Axis powers, the premise being that 'the enemy of our British enemy must be our friend'. Stern's successors, the triumvirate of Eldad, Yellin-Mor and Yitzhak Shamir, looked similarly to Stalin's Soviet Union.

Begin, in contrast, continued the legacy of Jabotinsky while altering and reinterpreting his mentor's approach – such as Jabotinsky's pro-British orientation. Despite the fact that the original Revisionist movement still existed, Begin successfully posed as Jabotinsky's anointed heir and through his Herut movement enveloped most of the right-wing fragments. This process was ingeniously continued by Begin for the best part of 30 years. He proved adept at forming alliances with other parties and at establishing political coalitions with breakaway groups from the Labour Zionist movement. Thus Herut became Gahal in 1965 and the Likud in 1973. Likud policy was anchored in the original sin of the partition of Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel, and mainstream Zionism's acquiescence in that. Despite the promise of a Jewish homeland in all the Land of Israel, the British gave the East Bank of the Jordan to the Emir Abdullah in the early 1920s, while the United Nations offered the West Bank to the Palestinians in 1947.

Begin never forgot Jabotinsky's claim to both sides of the Jordan and indeed he was the only Israeli Prime Minister who refused to meet King Hussein – even clandestinely. During both his governments, Begin balanced a Jabotinskyian pragmatism with a fundamentalist attachment to Judea and Samaria – the West Bank, which Israel had conquered during the Six Day War. Begin's sponsorship of the Camp David Accords and his decision to return Sinai to Egypt, however, resurrected the dormant far right in Israel. This was in a

way reminiscent of the original opposition to Jabotinsky and the Irgun by the Stern Group.

Begin was a deeply emotional man, haunted by the Holocaust and its possible recurrence. He believed deeply in Jabotinsky's concept of an 'iron wall' of military might which would protect the Jewish people from hostile adversaries. His attempt to delegitimize the PLO by branding them a purely terrorist organization akin to the Nazis, and his aim to provide security for population areas in Northern Israel, were central to his initiation of the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. His original acceptance of the 'big idea', whilst leaving the details to underlings, allowed Sharon to develop the war to unthinkable proportions.

Yitzhak Shamir exhibited little of the passion and none of the charisma of his predecessor. He was chosen because he came from the same background as Begin. He was perceived as a safe pair of hands to receive the Revisionist legacy. But was Shamir really a Revisionist and a disciple of Jabotinsky? Shamir may have fought the British, but he espoused a different ideology. Unlike his former comrades from Lehi who had remained on the nationalist right, he did not join any of the small far-right parties. He understood that real power resided only in the Likud. As subsequent events showed, he allied himself with the pragmatists of Likud such as Moshe Arens to produce acceptable answers to domestic, Palestinian and American pressure, but beneath the surface he followed his own individualistic path. It was one thing to propose solutions, but quite another to implement them.

Avraham Stern's mystical inclinations led him to the Bible rather than to the British Mandate when defining the parameters of the new Jewish state. The Land of Israel would stretch from the great river of Egypt – presumably the Nile – to the Euphrates in Iraq. Thus for Shamir, there could be no compromise on the issue of the borders of the Land of Israel. He strongly opposed the Camp David Accords. Shamir's broad approach was based on a coupling of Stern's maximalist philosophy to Ben-Gurion's perception of political reality – of what was possible under current conditions and what was not. Although Shamir meandered his way through the morass of Israeli political life, he was still at heart a loyal member of the Stern 'Gang', albeit in Revisionist clothing, even as the head of the Likud. As in the Lehi days of assassinations and military attacks, all decisions were carefully considered. There were no Beginesque dramatic gestures, but rather a movement forward when it was safe to do so and a

movement to the side when it was not. Standing still while opponents exhausted themselves in sheer frustration was always an option.

In 1989, he helped to marginalize his own Shamir Plan, which proposed Palestinian elections, when he refused to stand against a vociferous minority of 'Constraints Ministers'. Arik Sharon often remarked that 'the only Constraints Ministers in the government are Shamir and myself'. Shamir was perceived as tough and stubborn by his own colleagues and by the Israeli public. Yet by the autumn of 1991, he had resisted sufficiently all pressures to secure reasonable terms from the Americans for the opening of negotiations with the Palestinians and the Arab states. Judging by his inferences, Shamir regarded the Madrid Conference as purely ceremonial – a fig leaf for the arrangement of bilateral agreements with moderate opponents such as Jordan and the Gulf states. As he claimed after the 1992 election, he could have dragged out negotiations for another ten years.

Shamir's essentially immobile approach, which was applauded in earlier years, eventually led to severe dissension within the Likud, and many colleagues blamed him for the erroneous tactics which led to their electoral defeat in 1992. Yet these tactics – the art of political shadow boxing – could only be understood within the history of the different ideologies propagated by the factions constituting the Likud.

PROLOGUE

HALF-FORGOTTEN MEMORIES

The Traumatic Upheaval

On 17 May 1977, the citizens of Israel chose Menachem Begin and his Likud union of liberal and nationalist parties to lead them into their fourth decade as a sovereign nation-state. The Ma'arach, the Labour Alignment of socialist parties which had essentially governed the country since independence in 1948, was put out to political pasture after a disastrous decade in government. The election for the ninth Knesset produced 43 seats for Likud and only 32 for Labour. Nearly half of the Alignment vote had disappeared since the previous election in 1973. One half of the electorate had changed their political allegiance. Moreover, in 1977 a new party, the reformist Democratic Movement for Change, had been established. It competed with the Labour Party for the mainly Ashkenazi vote of the higher waged and the better educated. It had capitalized on public disillusionment with the Ma'arach, taking a record 15 seats and effectively fragmenting the vote for the Labour Alignment. Thus, for the first time, Israeli voters were given a real choice. No longer was the outcome a forgone conclusion – the victory of the Israeli Labour Party; there were now three options – the Labour Alignment, the Democratic Movement for Change, and Menachem Begin's Likud.

Nevertheless, the outcome was unexpected. Usually reliable opinion pollsters such as Pori and Dahaf had predicted an Alignment victory. The Hanoch Smith poll in *Ma'ariv*¹ on the eve of the election indicated 30 per cent for the Alignment, 25 per cent for the Likud, and only 11 per cent for the Democratic Movement for Change. The daily *Yediot Aharonot* showed the Alignment and the Likud neck and neck at 38–39 seats each. This confirmed the findings of a survey commissioned by the Ma'arach themselves. Even the most favourable

Modi'in Ezrachi poll gave the Likud only a possible three-seat advantage. The magnitude of the electoral victory for the Likud had thus been neither expected nor predicted. The Labour Party had anticipated an Alignment-led coalition with possibly the Democratic Movement for Change as its major partner. Yet it was rumoured in the Israeli press, some months before the election, in mid-April 1977 that Shimon Peres, the Ma'arach's leader, had floated the possibility of a worst-case-scenario coalition with the Likud at a closed party meeting in Tel Aviv. As in the British election of 1992, few opinion-poll analysts had taken due account of the large number of undecided voters, an estimated 20–25 per cent. This factor, together with a strong movement towards the Likud in the closing days of the campaign, upset all predictions and calculations.²

The election of Menachem Begin at the age of 64, in his ninth term as head of Herut, one of the constituent parties within the Likud, was both a psychological and a political watershed for many Israelis and Jewish supporters of Israel abroad. He was, for many, an irascible, uncontrollable hate-figure whose controversial exploits over four decades had tarnished and retarded the best endeavours of the great Zionist experiment. The shape of things to come was not a happy prospect for many sections of Israeli society. Shulamit Aloni, whose Civil Rights Movement had been all but decimated in the election, expressed the view of the secular Zionist left. She believed that 'the nation has become less rational, more nationalistic, more mystical, less governed by common sense and more influenced by money'.³ The genie had been let out of the bottle and, given his past record, would do great damage.

Outside Israel, Western governments, of both left and right, privately reacted with abject horror at the prospect of a Begin administration. President Jimmy Carter believed that Begin laid claim not only to the West Bank, but also to the East Bank – the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.⁴ Treading the path to peace with the participants in the Middle East conflict was never easy at the best of times. Now it appeared to many observers that Begin would lead the people of Israel into a hard-line ideological wilderness with no prospect of the promised land of peace negotiations at the end of it.

Diaspora Jews were similarly aghast. They had been weaned on the Zionist ideals of Ben-Gurion and Weizmann: the struggle for independence, the kibbutz and the blooming of the desert – the image of Israel as a brave socialist experiment and truly 'a light unto the nations'. The Board of Deputies of British Jews was described

as 'tight-lipped' when asked for an opinion on the outcome of the election.⁵ How could they suggest to the British public and the British government that the former commander of the Irgun Zva'i Leumi, who was associated with the blowing up of the King David Hotel, the hanging of British Army sergeants, and the massacre at Deir Yassin, was cast in the mould of his predecessors? Indeed, only a few years before, they had to contend with a demonstration of left-wing Jews – 'Zionists against Begin' – on their very doorstep when the Likud leader paid his first visit to Britain. Their decision to send Begin a congratulatory telegram became a long-drawn-out, agonising process. They saw him 'as a source of shame and embarrassment'.⁶ The BBC gently referred to Begin as 'the former guerilla leader'. Others, however, were not afraid to label him 'a terrorist chieftain'. The memories of Mandatory Palestine had clearly not dimmed.

Israeli career diplomats who were well versed in the culture of Labour Zionism now had to prepare themselves to say the exact opposite of what they had said before, and to do so with equal conviction. For more than thirty years, there had existed within Labour Zionism a sense that the party possessed an inalienable right to govern, embellished by an almost divine sense of purpose in constructing a new civilization in its own image. Political adversaries had to be opposed and contained if the new Jerusalem was to be built on the foundations of the old. Genuine religious fervour – based on faith in Judaism – had to be controlled, managed and marginalized. The dark forces of Revisionist Zionism were thus regarded as both subversive and satanic. To lose power to the right, with its belief in a nationalistic mythology and its worship of military symbols, was therefore both unthinkable and unimaginable. A victory by the right would represent a posthumous triumph, they argued, for the followers of those reactionary forces which had plagued Europe during the inter-war years and initiated the world into a new age of unprecedented barbarity. Such an absolutist mind-set dominated the thoughts of tens of thousands of life-long Labour people. The victory of 1977 was thus a blow of unique proportions.

In his diaries, Ben-Gurion records a discussion between Yigal Allon and an Israeli diplomat in 1948:

'What would happen' Allon asked, 'if Menachem Begin became Prime Minister?'

He was clearly taken aback.

Finally, he replied 'If Begin seized power, I would not serve him; if he were elected, then that would be different'.

Allon told him that he would never accept Begin as Prime Minister.⁷

This conversation took place two months after the *Altalena* controversy, where an Irgun gunship had been destroyed on the orders of Ben-Gurion and when the whiff of a coup d'état and the prospect of civil war were still in the air. Now, it had come to pass: Begin had indeed been elected by the people, and ironically Yigal Allon was number two on the defeated Ma'arach list and the outgoing Foreign Minister.

The deep emotions which the figure of Menachem Begin evoked – even before he had taken office – were therefore symptomatic of the great divide that separated the Revisionists and the Labour movement. Yet while there existed very clear political differences, the personal bitterness and the decades-long megaphone war between the two camps had imbued the ideological schism with a medieval righteousness. In part, both camps were products of an age of ideology which by 1977 already possessed a jaded, passé feeling of belonging to another time. The derision which each side heaped on the other seemed to defy scientific analysis and could not simply be explained away in purely political terms. One writer commented that,

while it would be misleading to argue that Mapai [the forerunner of the Israeli Labour Party and the Ma'arach] and the Revisionists were ideologically close, the differences in ideology cannot by themselves explain the psychological rivalry between them. The two movements created different political sub-cultures which accelerated the inter-party rivalry. They competed for the same resources through different organizational bodies and it was this inter-organizational competition which was translated into a deep political rift. Both parties tried to justify their rivalry and hostility by sharpening the ideological gaps; thus contributing to the conventional wisdom which explains inter-party relations as an expression of deep ideological controversy.⁸

In effect, this deep rivalry sustained the conviction of both sides in the political correctness of their positions throughout the decades of Labour rule. It also led to competing versions and different interpretations of history being constructed and promulgated. It was often more convenient to obfuscate the minutiae of events or omit them altogether.

In his introduction, written in March 1951, to the first edition of Begin's account of the Irgun's campaign against the British, *The Revolt*,

Ivan M. Greenberg, a former editor of the *London Jewish Chronicle*, wrote that 'a conspiracy of silence, inspired by diverse and often irrelevant motives, barred all effective publication in the United Kingdom of the case of the Jewish "rebels"'. Greenberg clearly was referring not only to the patriotic British media but also to knowledgeable British Jews who acquiesced in propagating the official line.⁹

Thus, although Herut became the second largest party in 1955 and continued to build on that base through the formation of Gahal in 1965 and the Likud in 1973, the policy of ignoring them and reducing knowledge of their history and that of the Irgun Zva'i Leumi to the absolute minimum had actually contributed to the creation of an informational vacuum. This was only filled by Herut's own laudatory propaganda which deified Revisionism's founder Vladimir Jabotinsky and beatified Begin. By 1977, few people outside Israel had any clear idea of what the Likud actually stood for and how indeed it had managed to come to power. The demonization of Begin – as terrorist and demagogue – substituted for understanding and analysis. Even in Israel, many were unaware of the Likud's true position on many issues.

The maxim that observes that governments lose elections rather than oppositions winning them undeniably held true in the political circumstances of 1977: the electorate voted against the Labour Alignment rather than for the Likud. So great was the disillusionment with the Ma'arach that some 30 per cent of the Likud vote came from former Labour Alignment voters. The political upheaval of 1977 represented such a severe psychological dislocation that in the aftermath many sought a more convincing explanation for the ascendancy of the Likud than that of simple vote splitting by the Democratic Movement for Change combined with the incompetence and bad luck of the Rabin government.

Shortly after the election result was announced, Yigal Hurvitz, a leader of the La'am faction of the Likud, suggested that the outcome was indirectly a result of the ideological deviation and moral decline of Mapai – a party to which he and other members of Likud had formerly belonged. Significantly, he remarked that the electorate had endorsed 'the covenant between the disciples of Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky'. Begin as the leader of Herut – the self-proclaimed heir of the Revisionist movement – understood the election result in much more specific terms: it was not a blanket victory for the realignment of hitherto hostile opponents who had found a commonality of interests and language through the Likud confederation of anti-Labour

parties, but a victory for Revisionism *per se*. Begin viewed his victory as the culmination of the long and bitter struggle between the Revisionists and the Labour movement to win the hearts and minds of the supporters of Zionism. Labour Zionism had finally been defeated by the disciples of Jabotinsky. Its long rule was over. In his acceptance speech, shortly after computer predictions of a Likud victory, Begin made a pertinent reference to 'the titanic struggle of ideas stretching back to 1931'. This somewhat obscure comment floated over the heads of the majority of the audience. Yet Begin was very much a man who carried the past with him. He had never forgotten 1931, the year of the 17th Zionist Congress when Chaim Weizmann had tendered his resignation as president of the World Zionist Organization. At his moment of triumph, then, Begin recalled the year in which the Revisionists had for the first time challenged the Labour-dominated leadership. The occasion had marked the arrival of Revisionist Zionism as a powerful and militant force in Zionist politics, with its own world-view and idea of the shape of things to come. The Zionist movement would never be the same again.

THIS IS THE first book to appraise critically the Likud government's rule – from 1977 to 1992 – and the version of Zionism that is central to Likud's ideology.

Colin Shindler examines afresh the political forces which moulded the world outlook of both Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir and shows how they were influenced by the pre-war nationalism of Pilsudski's Poland and Mussolini's Italy – as well as by the IRA's early campaign as an important example of anti-British revolt. Shindler details the political basis of Jabotinsky's revisionist Zionist movement and Begin's lifelong struggle to extend Israel's sovereignty to the West Bank and to the East Bank – the present-day Kingdom of Jordan. He explains such key issues as Begin's unexpected election victory in 1977, his rationale for invading Lebanon in 1982, and his regular invocation of the Holocaust in political debate.

Shamir's background is examined in detail from his days in the Stern 'Gang' through to his sudden return to party politics and his meteoric rise in the Likud. The book then explains why – despite the grey contrast he presented to Begin's passion and melodrama – Shamir stayed in power longer than any other Israeli Prime Minister apart from David Ben-Gurion. Also examined is Shamir's confrontation with the Bush Administration, his successor Benjamin Netanyahu's use of public relations and Likud attitudes towards Palestinian nationalism. The book concludes with further evaluation of Netanyahu and the crisis within the Likud caused by the Arafat-Rabin handshake.

Looking beyond propaganda and myths of both left and right, *Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream* provides the essential background to understanding the forthcoming Israeli election when the Likud hopes to recapture power.